

*Rhinoceros Toes, Manu V.17–18, and the Development of the Dharma System*

A well-attested dharmic forbids the eating of “five-nailed” (*pañcanakha*) animals, except for a restricted list, which often includes rhinoceroses. Examination of the passages in which this provision is found demonstrates that the rhinoceros is a later addition to the list of edible exceptions. Moreover, the rhinoceros has only three toes. The paper examines how and why the rhinoceros was added to the list, starting from a close examination of the phraseology of *Mānava Dharma Śāstra* V.17–18. Furthermore, based on the textual configuration of the “older” and “younger” five-nailed passages, a programmatic approach towards the identification of older dharmic material is suggested.

A widespread provision in the dharma texts (*MDŚ* V.18, *GDS* 17.27, *BDS* I.5.12.5, *ĀpDS* I.5.17.37, *VDS* XIV.47, *ViSmr* 51.6, *Yājñ.* I.177) forbids the eating of the flesh of ‘five-nailed’ (*pañcanakha*), i.e., ‘five-toed’ animals, save for a restricted group: porcupines, hedgehogs, monitor lizards, hares, tortoises—and often rhinoceroses (*khadga*). Of the texts just cited, only *Vāsisṭha* and *Yājñavalkya* do not include the rhinoceros on their five-nailed lists. I give two versions of the ones that do:

*GDS* 17.27

*pañcanakhās cāsalyakaśaśasvāvidgodhākhadgakacchapāḥ*

Five-nailed (animals) (are not to be eaten), except for the hedgehog, hare, porcupine, monitor, lizard, rhinoceros, and tortoise.

*MDŚ* V.17–18

*na bhakṣayed ekacarān ajñātāmś ca mrgadvijān  
bhakṣyeṣv api samuddiṣṭān sarvān pañcanakhāms tathā  
svāvidham śalyakam godhām khadgakūrmaśaśāms tathā  
bhakṣyān pañcanakheṣv āhur anuṣṭrāmś caikatodataḥ*

One should not eat solitary (animals) and unknown beasts and birds, even those indicated as among the edible, (nor) all five-nailed (animals).<sup>1</sup>

(But) they proclaim as edible the porcupine, hedgehog, monitor lizard, rhinoceros, tortoise, and hare among the five-nailed—as also animals with one row of teeth, except for camels.

<sup>1</sup> The peculiarity of this phrasing will be discussed below (n. 22).

Despite its widespread representation in the dharma texts, the rhinoceros seems to be a secondary addition to this list, as Heinrich Lüders pointed out exactly ninety years ago in an article devoted to exactly this dietary provision (“Eine indische Speiseregel,” *ZDMG* 61 [1907]: 641–44). A standard list of five edible five-nailed animals, i.e., this same list minus the rhino, is rather surprisingly common in a variety of ancient Indian text-types, in the fixed and memorable expression *pañca pañcanakhā bhakṣyāḥ* “five five-nailed ones are edible.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Discussion of the motivation for the ban on five-nailed food-stuffs, as well as the justification for the particular exceptions to the ban, is beyond the scope of this paper. But since humans are the paradigmatic five-nailed beasts, it may be reasonable to follow B. K. Smith (1994, *Classifying the Universe*, 243–44) in assuming that it is essentially a ban on eating humans or human-like animals (esp. monkeys), and that the edible exceptions are “not overly human.” See also F. Zimmermann, *The Jungle and the Aroma of Meats* (1987), 173ff. Some distant support for the notion of “five-nailed” as equivalent to “human / humanoid” may come from Śūdraka’s play, *Mṛcchakaṭīka*, where the villain Śākāra refers to his *daśaṇah[a]*- [= *daśanakha*- ‘ten-nailed’] hands (preparatory to strangling Vasantasenā) (*Mṛcch.* VIII.20): multiples of five nails as a human characteristic.

Note also that four of the exceptions to the five-nailed provision, i.e., *svavidh-*, *salyaka-*, *godhā-*, and *śaśa-*, form the first part of the natural class of *bileśaya-* ‘hole-dwellers’ in *Suśruta* (I.46.26), where the medical effects and the taste of their flesh are described (vv. 27–30).

For ‘five-clawed’ as an animal classification in Iranian, see H. P. Schmidt, “Ancient Iranian animal classification” (*Sillr* 5–6 [1980]: 209–44), with some discussion also of the Indic material (p. 235).

Consider a few of the contexts in which this expression occurs.<sup>3</sup> Both epics contain episodes in which a character is warned against eating the meat of a non-conforming five-nailed creature: a dog in *MBh* XII.139.66, a monkey in *R* IV.17.33–35. In the latter passage the monkey Vālin, just fatally wounded by Rāma, taunts him for killing a five-nailed creature he cannot eat, with exact legalistic phraseology:

*R* IV.17.34–35

*pañca pañcanakhā bhakṣyā brahmakṣatreṇa rāghava  
śalyakah śvavidho godhā śaśaḥ kūrmas ca pañcamah*

*carma cāsthi ca me rājan na spr̥ṣanti maṇiṣinaḥ  
abhakṣyāṇi ca māmsāni so 'ham pañcanakho hataḥ*

"Five five-nailed (creatures) can be eaten by brahmins and kṣatriyas: hedgehog, porcupine, monitor lizard, hare, and tortoise as fifth."

My skin and bones, o king, the wise do not touch; (my) flesh is inedible. Lo, I am a five-toed [i.e., forbidden] creature slain.

Similar passages are found in the *Kūrma Purāṇa*<sup>4</sup> and in Pāli, in the *Mahāsutasomajātika* (no. 537), where a king is abjured not to eat human flesh, again with a quotation from the law:

*Jāt* 537(58)

*pañca pañcanakhā<sup>5</sup> bhakkhā khattiyena pajānatā  
abhakkham rāja bhakkhesi tasmā adhammiko tuvaṃ*

"Five five-nailed ones are to be eaten by a knowledgeable Kṣatriya."

O king, you eat what is not to be eaten. Therefore you are adharmic.

Equally interesting is the extent to which this exact expression, *pañca pañcanakhā bhakṣyāḥ*, has penetrated ancient Indian scholasticism—as a meta-example, if you will, to illustrate scholarly means of presentation and interpretation. In the grammatical tradition Patañjali uses

the phrase in the introduction to the *Mahābhāṣya* (I.1.1 [p. 5 in Kielhorn]) when debating the question whether it is better to give correct grammatical forms for emulation, allowing the incorrect ones to be inferred and avoided—or to forbid incorrect forms, allowing the correct ones to be inferred and employed. The "five five-nailed" provision illustrates the former possibility: with the five pronounced edible, all other five-nailed creatures can be assumed to be forbidden.

*MBhāṣ* I.1.1

*pañca pañcanakhā bhakṣyā ity ukte gamyate etad ato 'nye  
'bhakṣyā iti*

When it is said "Five five-nailed may be eaten," from that one understands that the others may not be eaten.

Similarly in darśana contexts, the "five five-nailed" is a standard Mīmāṃsā example of a *parisaṃkhyā-vidhī*, an injunction involving an exhaustive enumeration, the force of which is not in the enumeration itself, but in the implication of exclusion, in effect forbidding what is absent from the list, introduced by the phrase "yathā *pañca pañcanakhāḥ* . . ."<sup>6</sup>

It is worth pausing for a moment to consider the curious fact that the older, rhinoceros-free versions of the five-nailed provision are found almost exclusively in non-dharma texts, while the updated version with rhinoceros is found across the dharma sūtras and śāstras but hardly elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> This situation conforms to the linguistic principle that archaisms are preserved on the margin, that is, in those texts that borrow categories from

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Nyāyakośa*, 447ff.; *Mīmāṃsākośa*, 5: 2462f.; also P. V. Kane, *HDŚ*, V, part II (1977): 1229–30. I am grateful to P. Olivelle for drawing this to my attention, and for valuable discussion of the whole five-nailed topic, though he might not agree with all the views expressed herein.

<sup>7</sup> Minus rhino,

with enumeration of other animals:

non-dharma texts: *R* IV.17.33, *Kūrma Pur.* (see n. 4)

dharma texts: *VDS* 14.39 [but see below], *Yājñ* I.177

"*pañca pañcanakha*" (but without enumeration):

non-dharma texts: *MBh* XII.139.66, *Jāt* 537, *MBhāṣ* I.1.1, *Nyāya/Mīmāṃsā*

vs.

Plus rhino:

dharma texts: *GDS* 17.27, *BDS* I.5.12.5 (but see below),

*ĀpDS*

I.5.17.37, *ViSmr* 51.6, *MDŚ* V.17–18

non-dharma text: *Mārķ. Pur.* 35.2 (see n. 11)

<sup>3</sup> Several of these passages were first adduced by Lüders (*MBh* XII.149.66 [crit. ed., = Lüders XII.141.70], *Jāt* 537, *MBhāṣ* I.1.1., as well as the dharma texts proper).

<sup>4</sup> *Kūr. Pur.* (adhyāya 17, p. 572 [Bibliotheca Indica, 1890]), which ascribes the rule to Manu (*manur āha prajāpatih*), even though the list contains only five animals, not the six of *MDŚ* V.18.

<sup>5</sup> Lüders's correction (p. 641) for *pañca na khā* in Fausbøll.

other areas, while innovations occur in the center, in those texts where the categories are principally elaborated—a principle that can be applied to both geographical dialects and to analogic changes in a grammatical system (Kuryłowicz's famous Fourth Law of Analogy).<sup>8</sup> The implications of this for the study of the development of the dharmic system in ancient India are fairly important: if we are looking for older legal material, we may do well to look at quotations and employments of dharmic prescriptions exactly in non-dharmic contexts, even when these texts are chronologically younger than the dharma texts proper.<sup>9</sup>

From the wide use in a variety of Sanskrit contexts of just this fixed formula *pañca pañcanakhā bhakṣyāḥ*, I think we must infer not only that the original dharmic provision contained only five animals but also that this was a *closed set*, not an expandable list that happened to include only five animals to begin with. So the inclusion of a sixth animal in most of the dharma texts (and the resulting necessary deletion of the first *pañca* from the verbal formula) seems to me a puzzle that needs explanation. In fact, we can see the change almost as it happens. An intermediate stage between the closed set and the expanded list is found in a somewhat incoherent compromise in *BDS*, which ends the provision with the canonical phrase *pañca pañcanakhāḥ*—having first enumerated *six* animals, the last of which, the rhinoceros, is immediately deleted.<sup>10</sup>

*BDS* 1.5.12.5

*bhakṣyāḥ śvāvidgodhāśaśalyakacchapakhadgāḥ  
khadgavarjāḥ pañca pañcanakhāḥ*

Five five-toed animals may be eaten, the porcupine, the monitor lizard, the hare, the hedgehog, the tortoise and the rhinoceros, except the rhinoceros.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> J. Kuryłowicz, "La nature des procès dits 'analogiques'," *Acta Linguistica* 5 (1945–49): 15–37. [Reprinted in E. Hamp, F. W. Householder, and R. Austerlitz, *Readings in Linguistics*, II (1966): 158–74 (Fourth Law, pp. 169–70).] For this principle applied to geographical dialects, cf., e.g., H. H. Hock, *Principles of Historical Linguistics* (1986), 440–44.

<sup>9</sup> I hope to pursue this project in the future.

<sup>10</sup> The next two provisions (*BDS* 1.5.12.6–7), concerning animals with cloven hooves and birds, also follow this strategy of specifically stipulating that *five* types may be eaten, listing *six*, and then immediately subtracting the sixth. I assume that vv. 6–7 have been modeled on 5, since no similar provisions for cloven-hooved animals or birds are known to me.

<sup>11</sup> The same ambivalence may be displayed in *Vāsiṣṭha*. Though, as noted above, the rhinoceros does not appear in the

As I noted, Lüders already saw that the restricted list of five animals was the older situation, but he did not attempt to explain how the list came to be expanded as it did. He merely suggested that the expanded list found in the various dharma texts reflected "local custom" (p. 642). But if this were the case, we might expect different versions of the expanded list according to locality, whereas the rhinoceros is the only item usually added.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, the rhinoceros is in uneasy company here. For one thing, it is simply out of scale with the rest of the small- to medium-sized animals. For another, rhinoceroses have only *three toes*.<sup>13</sup> Now one may consider this last fact to be irrelevant. An ancient Indian jurist might be expected to have little opportunity to observe these beasts, and if he should encounter one, he would probably have other things on his mind than examining its feet. However, I have found over the years that ancient

five-nailed list in this text (*VDS* 14.39), shortly thereafter is the provision

*VDS* 14.47

*khadje tu vivadanty agrāmyasūkare ca*

But they dispute about the rhinoceros and the wild pig.

The potential but questionable edibility of the rhinoceros is thus mentioned in the text, but not in context of five-nailed creatures. (In fact, this provision directly follows one concerning domestic cattle.)

Another strategy for dealing with the conflict between the closed five-member system and the rhinoceros is to eliminate another animal in order to include the rhino, as *Viṣṇu* does. In *ViSmr* 51.6 *khadga* takes the place of *śvāvidh* 'porcupine'; in *Mārk. Pur.* 35.2 that of *śalyaka* 'hedgehog'. However, neither text explicitly identifies this as a five-member set. Cf. *ViSmr* 51.6 *śaśaka-śalyaka-godhā-khadga-kūrma-varjaṃ pañcanakhāmāśāṣane*. . . . "In the eating of the flesh of five-nailed creatures, except for hare, hedgehog, monitor lizard, rhinoceros, and tortoise. . ."

<sup>12</sup> The only exception is *ĀpDS* which adds a seventh item at the end: *pūtikhaṣa*, of unknown identity. *ĀpDS* 1.5.17.37 *pañcanakhānām godhā-kacchapa-śvāvīt-śalyaka-khadga-śaśa-pūtikhaṣa-varjaṃ*. (Phonologically it most resembles the *plant* names *pūtika*, *pūtika*, *pūthikā*, which would make a five-nailed interpretation difficult. On these words, see Mayrhofer *KEWA*, s.v. *pūtikah*<sup>2</sup>, *EWA*, s.v. *pūtika*-.)

<sup>13</sup> Cf., e.g., *Grzimek's Encyclopedia of Mammals*, IV (1990), 549; N. J. van Strien, *The Sumatra Rhinoceros Dicerorhinus sumatrensis (Fischer, 1814) in the Gunung Leuser National Park, Sumatra, Indonesia* (1986), 19: "The legs of a rhino are relatively short and columnar, ending in a flat sole with three hoofs [sic] or nails."

Indian natural history can be remarkably accurate, and that if we take it literally, it can often illuminate the texts in which it is embedded.<sup>14</sup> So, I think we need an explanation not only of why one particular animal was inserted into the closed set of the five five-toed, but why that very animal is one that has only three toes.<sup>15</sup>

Though one way out of this difficulty might be to assume that 'rhinoceros' is not the correct identification for *khadga*, but rather refers to a properly five-toed animal, this strategy will not work. For one thing, Middle and Modern Indic descendants of Skt. *khadga* all seem to refer to the rhinoceros or parts thereof (see Turner, *CDIAL*, s.v.). Furthermore, several Middle Vedic pas-

sages, to be discussed below, clearly situate the *khadga* in the realm of fierce wild beasts and suggest that its hide is armor-like, an accurate observation of the Indian rhino (as its German name, *Panzerhorn*, also reflects). See *Grzimek's Encyclopedia of Mammals*, IV (1990): 611: "Indian rhinoceros has . . . thick skin that has the appearance of 'armor-plating.'" Perhaps the clinching piece of evidence is a *MBh* passage that gives an unmistakable description of a rhinoceros. In the duel between Bhiṣma and Aśvatthāman, the latter shoots an arrow at the former:

*MBh* VII.11.6

*lalāstham tato bāṇam dhārayām āsa pāṇḍavaḥ  
yathā śrīṅgaṃ vane drptaḥ khadgo dhārayate nṛpa*

The Pāṇḍava held the arrow standing on his forehead,  
as in a forest a wild rhinoceros holds his own horn,  
o king.

Remember that the Indian rhinoceros has only one horn (*R. unicornis*), unlike his two-horned African cousins.

So, we are stuck with the rhinoceros and must attempt to reconcile his three toes with his five-toed companions in *dharma*. To understand this, we must use extra-dharmic sources, to expand on clues found in the *dharma* texts. The crucial words are *ekacara-* in *MDŚ* V.17 and *godhā-* in *MDŚ* V.18 and other five-toed texts.

As we saw above, V.17 forbids one to eat 'solitary' (*ekacara-*) animals, without further specification. The commentators make a feeble attempt to flesh out the provision: Kullūkabhaṭṭa suggests this means 'snakes, etc.:'; Medhātithi adds 'owls' to Kullūka's snakes. But they fail to mention the *ekacara* animal par excellence, perhaps because at the time of their commentaries this lore had long since disappeared from continental India.

In early Buddhist sources, Pratyeka Buddhas, those who attain enlightenment for themselves alone, are compared to rhinoceroses and given the epithet *khadga-* / *khadgin[a]-* / *pratyeka-khadgin-*. (Cf., e.g., *Mmk* [*Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*] 67.9, 14, etc., and Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, s. v. *khadgin-*.) Indeed, the Pāli *Suttanipāta* and the Buddhist Sanskrit *Mahāvastu*—

four of the five on the original list are found. This may be another indication that the three-nailed rhino was not originally part of the overall category of the five-nailed and has intruded only into the legal provision under discussion.

*Bhāg.Pur.* III.10.23–24

*śṛṇu pañcanakhān paśūn  
svā sṛgālo vṛko vyāghro mārjārah śaśa-śallakau  
simhaḥ kapir gajaḥ kūrmo, godhā ca makarādayaḥ*

<sup>14</sup> See Jamison, "Linguistic and Philological Remarks on Some Vedic Body Parts, pt. II: *kukṣī-*," in *Studies in Memory of Warren Cowgill (1929–1985)*, ed. Calvert Watkins (1987), 66–91; idem, *The Ravenous Hyenas and the Wounded Sun: Myth and Ritual in Ancient India* (1991), pt. 1.2B; "Natural History Notes on the Rigvedic 'Frog' Hymn," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 72–73 (1991–92): 137–44.

The position of the rhinoceros in South Asian art, folklore, and general culture has been treated in a number of publications, of which I will mention only a few. A very useful and comprehensive survey, particularly of visual representations of the animal, is found in J. Bautze, "The problem of the *khadga* (Rhinoceros *unicornis*) in the light of archaeological finds and art," *South Asian Archaeology 1983*, ed. J. Schotsmans and M. Taddei (1985), 405–33. [I am grateful to R. Salomon for this reference.] G. W. Briggs, "The Indian Rhinoceros as a Sacred Animal," *JAOS* 51 (1931): 276–82 is rather thinner than its title promises, but interestingly he alludes to what is probably another version of the *Mahābhārata*-derived folktale that is treated in a very recent *JAOS* article, W. S. Sax, "Fathers, Sons, and Rhinoceroses: Masculinity and Violence in the *Pāṇḍav Lilā*," *JAOS* 117 (1997): 278–93. An extremely full bibliography of all rhinoceros-related materials (though a bit skimpy on Indic texts) is provided by the rhinoceros enthusiast L. C. Rookmaaker, *Bibliography of the Rhinoceros: An Analysis of the Literature on the Recent [sic] Rhinoceros in Culture, History and Biology* (1983).

<sup>15</sup> Zimmermann, *Jungle*, 174, n. 45, suggests that the term "pañcanakha . . . may be interpreted as an approximative reference to beasts of prey as a whole," even if they have fewer toes. This does not seem a promising solution for various reasons, including the presence of non-predatory animals like hares (and rhinoceroses!) on the list. It is well to remember that despite their size, armored appearance, and fierce reputation, rhinoceroses are herbivores.

Note also that in the *Bhāg. Pur.* list of *pañcanakha* animals, not categorized by edibility, the rhinoceros is absent, though

and, as I learned from R. Salomon (p.c.), also the new Gāndhāri material—contain a series of essentially identical verses (save for dialect) known as the *khaggavisānasutta* / *khadgaviṣāna-gāthā* or ‘rhinoceros sūtra, rhinoceros verses’.<sup>16, 17</sup>

The constant refrain of these verses is

*Suttanipāta* 35ff.

*eko care khaggavisānakappo*

*Mv* I.359.16ff.

*eko care khadgaviṣānakalpo*

One should wander alone like a rhinoceros.<sup>18</sup>

The rhinoceros is thus identified as the archetypal solitary beast—*ekacara*—whose behavior solitary sages should emulate.<sup>19</sup> Modern discussions of rhinoceros behavior concur with this ancient characterization. Accord-

<sup>16</sup> The compound *khaggavisāna* / *khadgaviṣāna* is sometimes interpreted, beginning with the Pāli commentary, not as ‘rhinoceros’, but as a *taipuruṣa* meaning ‘rhinoceros-horn’. This meaning does not make sense in context, as we will see, and without further discussion I will simply declare that I find convincing the analysis of this word as a *bahuvrīhi*, meaning ‘having a horn like a sword’, hence simply ‘rhinoceros’, with a possibly folk-etymologized *khadga* ‘sword’.

Whether or not *khadga* ‘rhinoceros’ and *khadga* ‘sword’ are etymologically related is irrelevant here: the visual similarity between sword and horn would be sufficient to suggest a synchronic association between phonologically similar or identical words. For further discussion, see M. Mayrhofer, *KEWA*, s.v. *khadgāh*<sup>1</sup> and *khadgāh*<sup>2</sup>; *EWA*, s.v. *khadga*- (with skepticism about the connection) and esp. the helpful discussion in Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, s.v. *khadga-viṣāna*. *Khadga*- ‘sword’ we will return to below.

<sup>17</sup> Bautze, “The problem of the *khadga*,” 414, n. 21, notes that there is also “a parallel expression in a canonical Jaina text: *Aupapātika Sūtra*.”

<sup>18</sup> The interpretation, “One should wander alone like a \*rhinoceros horn,” conjures up an unintentionally comic picture. See n. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Note that *ekacara*- is an epithet of *munis* also in non-Buddhist sources of this approximate period, i.e., the epics (e.g., *MBh* I.86.5, III.78.21, XII.23.22), and in fact in *MDŚ* itself the ascetic is urged to “wander alone” in order to attain liberation:

*MDŚ* VI.42

*eka eva careṇ nityaṃ siddhārtham asahāyavān*

Let him always wander alone, without companion, for the sake of success.

ing to Grzimek’s *Encyclopedia*, “rhinos are basically solitary animals, and their social behavior is rather limited” (p. 610; cf. also p. 637). S. D. Ripley: “The rhino is distinctly an unsociable animal. Two adults are never seen together except during a fight or when mating.”<sup>20</sup> Moreover, there are some indications that the root *car* ‘wander’ is particularly appropriate to the seasonal behavior of the rhinoceros, who seems almost to conduct himself like a roaming mendicant. Ripley: “At certain times of the year the rhinoceros appears to wander far away from its haunts . . . the Great Indian Rhinoceros tends to hold a territory during part of the year, but . . . at the onset of the rather indefinite breeding cycle, an individual may leave its territory and embark on a wandering migration, a *Wanderung*.”

What I am suggesting then is that the edible rhinoceros in *Manu* V.18 (and elsewhere) was originally listed as an exception not to the ban on eating five-toed animals, but the ban on eating solitary, *ekacara*, animals.<sup>21</sup>

Look at the structure of V.17–18. V.17 forbids three types of meat: from solitary animals, from unknown ones, and from five-toed ones. The next provision gives exceptions, and it is only in the third *pāda* of that verse that the exceptions are specified as five-nailed.

Of course the term *siddhārtha*- here recalls (presumably deliberately) the Buddha and situates the verse in a Buddhist verbal context.

<sup>20</sup> S. D. Ripley, “Territorial and Sexual Behavior in the Great Indian Rhinoceros: A Speculation,” *Ecology* 33 (1952): 570–73. Citations are from p. 572. Cf. also, for the Sumatran rhino, van Strien’s observation that “tracks of two animals moving together, other than cow and calf, were extremely rare” (*The Sumatra Rhinoceros*, 117). However, E. P. Gee, while not disputing the essential correctness of Ripley’s characterization of the Indian rhino, notes that from his observations rhinos do come together under certain conditions other than mating (“Further Observations on the Life History of the Great Indian One-horned Rhinoceros [*R. unicornis* Linn.],” *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 51 [1953]: 765–72; quote on p. 770).

<sup>21</sup> If rhinoceroses are edible *ekacara* animals, which are the ones forbidden to be eaten? In at least one passage the term seems to refer to predatory beasts that hunt alone, rather than in groups:

*Bhāg. Pur.* V.8.18

*api ca na vrkaḥ śālāvṛko ’nyatamo vā naikacara ekacaro vā bhakṣayati*

Does not a wolf or a hyena, or some other non-solitary or solitary (beast) eat [the deer]?

Such animals may be the object of the ban in *MDŚ* V.17a.

## MDŚ V.17–18

*na bhakṣayed ekacarān ajñātāms ca mṛgadvijān  
bhakṣyeṣv api samuddiṣṭān sarvān pañcanakhāms tathā  
śvāvidham śalyakam godhām khadgākūrmaśāśāms tathā  
bhakṣyān pañcanakheṣv āhuḥ*

One should not eat solitary (animals) and unknown beasts and birds, even those indicated as among the edible. (nor) all five-nailed (animals).

(But) they proclaim as edible the porcupine, hedgehog, monitor lizard, rhinoceros, tortoise, and hare among the five-nailed.

I would suggest that the original strategy was to list exceptions to any of the categories named in the preceding blanket provision—solitary animals as well as five-toed ones.<sup>22</sup>

If we provisionally accept this explanation, we must then confront two further questions. How did the rhino get so thoroughly incorporated into what is undeniably the later canonical list of the five-toed? And why is it so important to specify that rhinoceroses can be eaten?

<sup>22</sup> We might note in passing that V.17 is peculiarly phrased, and the awkwardness of its expression may signal that it is a restructured versification of several older provisions, with the joins imperfectly soldered.

1) The expression *na bhakṣayet . . . sarvān pañcanakhān . . .* "One should not eat all five-nailed (animals)" is not only immediately contradicted by V.18 with its list of edible exceptions, but syntactically the combination of negative + 'all' is quite rare in legal texts (and indeed elsewhere). In a collection of all examples of *sarva* in *Manu* I have found only a handful of somewhat parallel instances, most of which can be explained away. I think it at least possible that *sarva-pañcanakha-* is a metrically similar substitute for the old formula *pañca pañcanakha-* in these very changed circumstances (i.e., six animals not five, and negative context not positive).

2) Pāda c, *bhakṣyeṣv api samuddiṣṭān*, "even those indicated among the edible," is difficult to construe. If it is taken with b, *ajñātāms ca mṛgadvijān*, as Bühler does ("Let him not eat . . . unknown beasts and birds, though they may fall under [the categories of] eatable [creatures]"), it makes no sense. If they are truly unknown, how does one know what category they belong to? If it is taken with d, with Burnell and Hopkins and Doniger and Smith [cf. the latter's "nor any animals with five claws, not even those listed among the animals to be eaten"], it is directly contradicted by V.18, which indeed lists the five-clawed animals to be eaten. I have no solution to the conundrum of pāda c, and the commentators ignore or avoid the problem.

Let us begin with the first. Here I think the answer lies in chance word association—a habitual association of the words *godhā* and *khadga* in another part of the semantic range of each. As we already noted, *khadga* means 'sword' as well as 'rhinoceros'. Whether these are two semantic specializations of an original single word or are historically homonyms, perhaps partly unified by folk etymology, is irrelevant to our purposes. The 'sword' sense is extremely common—especially in texts with a preoccupation with weaponry, like the battle books of the *Mahābhārata*. *Godhā* is the name of the 'monitor lizard'.<sup>23</sup>

But by an easily understood semantic transference, *godhā* can also be used for objects made of lizard skin, especially the wrist-guard worn by bowmen. In this meaning, it frequently appears in association with other offensive and defensive weapons—like the sword, as in the following *MBh* passage:

## MBh III.262.19

*sa dhanvī baddhatūnirah khadgagodhāṅgulitravān  
anvadhāvan mṛgam rāmo rudras tārāmṛgam yathā*

With his bow, with his quiver tied on, with sword, wrist-guard, and finger-guards,

Rāma ran after the deer, as Rudra (did) the stellar deer.

[Cf. *Rāmāyaṇa* I.21.8.]

If *khadga / godhā* is a habitual collocation in these weaponry contexts, it would not be surprising that in the dharmic food provisions, when both words are mentioned for independent reasons, *godhā* might, as it were, "capture" its regular verbal partner *khadga* and incorporate it into the old five-toed list. In several of the five-toed provisions that also name the rhinoceros, *godhā* and *khadga* are directly adjacent to each other.<sup>24</sup> In other words I am suggesting that the power of a fixed verbal formula partly overrode semantics, once the two words were in proximity for other reasons. It is rather as if in English the common phrase "the hare and the tortoise" caused the latter animal to be incorporated into a list of

<sup>23</sup> Almost universally rendered as 'iguana' in our dictionaries and translations—an unhappy choice, since the iguana is exclusively a New World animal. However, in the nineteenth century the term 'iguana' seems to have been loosely applied to any large lizard, and modern works simply copy this usage.

We owe our precise understanding of the meaning of *godhā* also to Heinrich Lüders ("Von indischen Tieren, I: *Godhā*" *ZDMG* 96 [1942]: 23–50).

<sup>24</sup> *GDS* 17.27, *ViSmr* 51.6, *MDŚ* V.18.

small mammals: “the mole, the vole, the rabbit, the hare and the tortoise, the woodchuck, the raccoon. . . .”

So, the anomalous position of the rhinoceros in this list is, I would claim, the result of two independent factors: it was originally mentioned as an exception to the *ekacara* provision, but was swept into the list of *pañcanakha* beasts on the strength of a chance verbal association with another member of that list.

But why is it crucial to mention rhinos at all? Though it is perhaps not the first meat-source that we might think of, it actually stands at the top of a particularly important food hierarchy. According to many texts (*MDŚ* III.272, *GDS* 15.15, *ĀpDS* II.17.1, *ViSmṛ* 80.14, *Yājñ* I.259, *MBh* XIII.88.10), it is the *best* food to serve at a *śrāddha* dinner, the ceremony in honor of the ancestors (*pitṛ*), and satisfies them longer than other dishes, indeed endlessly.

*MDŚ* III.272

*kālaśakaṃ mahāśalkāḥ khadgaḥ lohāmiṣaṃ madhu  
ānanyāyaiva kalpyante munyannāni ca sarvaśah*

(The herb) *kālaśaka*, (the fish) *mahāśalka*, the flesh of a rhinoceros or a red goat, honey, and ascetic's foods of all sorts serve (to satisfy the pitars) for eternity.

This quality of rhinoceros meat was well enough known that it was also remembered and specifically mentioned in the medical treatise of Suśruta, I.46.52, which names rhinoceros meat (and no other flesh that I have found) *pitṛyam pavitram āyuṣyam* “consecrated to the pitars, a means of purification, affording long life.”<sup>25</sup>

How rhinoceros flesh achieved this exalted status in the food chain is another story—with its roots partly in Vedic ritual and perhaps in textually unpreserved lore about the animal. With regard to the latter, though I have not been able to discover any traces<sup>26</sup> of the aphrodisiac powers attributed to rhinoceros horn elsewhere in Asia

(or of its poison-detecting powers in medieval Europe), it would not be surprising if this was part of unwritten folk memory.

As for the former, the Vedic sources, we find the rhinoceros first<sup>27</sup> mentioned in the long list of fanciful supplemental victims at the Aśvamedha ritual. It is dedicated to the All Gods, *Viśve Devāḥ* (cf. *VS* 24.40, *MS* III.14.21; note its absence in *KS* and *TS*). Though this context is not terribly informative, somewhat later Vedic material is more useful.

The other Vedic use for the rhinoceros is in a ritual *dakṣiṇā* or priestly gift. At the one-day Soma rite known as the *Apaciti*, a grand chariot is presented, with accoutrements made of the hide of various noble wild beasts: the tiger, the boar, the leopard, the bear, and sometimes the rhinoceros, whose hide is used for a suit of armor, *khādḡgakavaca-* (*JB* II.103; *ŚŚS* XIV.33.20).<sup>28</sup>

*JB* II.103 (cf. Caland, *JBInA*, §134)

*. . . tasyāśvarathaś caturyug dakṣiṇā bhavati . . . tasya vaiyāghraḥ parivāro bhavati dvaipo dhanvadhīr ārkṣa upāsamgaḥ / khādḡgakavaco 'dhyāsthātū bhavati saṅnaddhaḥ samnaddhasārathīḥ . . .*

The *dakṣiṇā* for this (ritual) is a horse chariot, yoked with four (horses). . . . Its covering is made of tiger(skin), its bow-case of leopard(skin), its quiver of bear(skin). There is a mounted warrior, with armor of rhinoceros(-hide), girded (for battle), along with a girded charioteer.

The combined fierceness of the animals is presumably employed to compel the “respect” (*apaciti*) for which this ritual is undertaken.

The next time we meet rhinoceroses, it is in the description of *śrāddha* dinners. As we just noted, rhinoceros meat is the most satisfying food for the ancestors. But several dharma texts require that implements made out of rhinoceros should also be used: seats spread with rhinoceros hide (*ĀpDS* 2.7.17.1, *khādḡgopastaraṇe*) or vessels made of rhinoceros horn (presumably<sup>29</sup>) (*khādḡgapātrāṇi*, *ViSmṛ* 79.22, 24; cf. 16). I see these passages

evidence, and his article shows little sign of concern with scholarly exactitude.

<sup>27</sup> It is, of course, well represented visually on seals, etc., from the Indus Valley civilization. See, e.g., Bautze, “The problem of the khadga” (above, n. 14).

<sup>28</sup> Not all versions of this *dakṣiṇā* use rhinoceros hide. Cf. *ĀpDS* 22.12.7, *KŚS* 22.10.32.

<sup>29</sup> Though Bautze, “The problem of the khadga,” 410, believes that the vessels are of hide, not horn, without specifying reasons for this opinion.

<sup>25</sup> The commentators Rāghavānanda and Nandana also remark on the suitability of rhinoceros meat for the ancestors, *ad MDŚ* V.18, and this employment is also remarked on in a number of purāṇas (cf. Bautze [1985], 411). Moreover, the tradition survives into modern times: in the modern folktales discussed by Briggs and Sax (above, n. 14) the rhinoceros is needed for a *śrāddha* observation (see, esp., Sax, “Fathers,” 281 and n. 20).

<sup>26</sup> W. F. H. Ansell (“A Note on the Position of Rhinoceros in Burma,” *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 47 [1947]: 249–76) rather casually mentions a tradition of rhino horn as an aphrodisiac among Hindus (p. 253), but gives no

as transitional between the Vedic use of rhinoceros *hide* in the *dakṣiṇā* at the Apaciti ritual and the rhinoceros *meat* of the *śrāddha* dinner proper: from the artifact created from the formidable exterior of the rhino, its armor-like skin and sword-like horn, to the consumption of its actual flesh, presumably to internalize this same power.<sup>30</sup>

It is for this reason that the rhinoceros *must* be specifically mentioned as an exception to the *ekacara* pro-

<sup>30</sup> *ViSmṛ* 80.14 specifies rhinoceroses *without* horns (*viṣāṇa-varjyā ye khaḍgāḥ*) as the *śrāddha* food. Perhaps what this provision intends is that the horn should have been previously removed, to manufacture the *śrāddha* vessels mentioned in 79.22, 24.

That it is the flesh of the rhinoceros that is eaten at the *śrāddha* dinner, not some preparation of, say, powdered rhinoceros horn, is shown by the terms *khaḍgamāṃsa* of *ĀpDS* 2.7.17.1, *GDS* 15.15, *MBh* XIII.88.10 and *khaḍga . . . āmiṣa* of *MDS* III.272, both 'rhinoceros flesh'.

vision in the dharma literature: the meat is crucial to the best *śrāddha* ceremonies. From this position the animal is reassigned to the category of the five-nailed, whose closed-set nature is then breached.

I hope this little exercise has demonstrated a few of the ways in which our dharma texts were composed and recomposed, accreted through semantic associations and word associations that are no longer apprehensible on the surface. Moreover, it suggests a programmatic approach to the study of the history of the dharma system, namely systematic collection of dharmic quotations from non-dharmic sources, which may have adopted more archaic versions of the injunctions and preserved them while the dharma texts themselves were modernized. And I hope in addition to have succeeded in subtracting a few toes from the lonely rhinoceros.

STEPHANIE W. JAMISON

HARVARD UNIVERSITY